

NATURAL HISTORY/GEOLOGY

Geology

From the overlook at Vista Point within Castle Crags State Park it is possible to see several of northern California's most interesting geologic features. The story told by those features began some 300 million years ago when this part of California was an ocean floor. Deposits from this era now constitute some of the oldest rock in the state. Some of this old ocean floor material is exposed in the walls of the Sacramento River Canyon between Dunsuir and Redding.

Even now as the floor of the Pacific Ocean continues to expand and slide under the continent, enormous amounts of heat build up. Eventually, deep within the earth's mantle, this heat is sufficient to melt the oncoming ocean floor materials which are rich in iron, magnesium and other moisture-laden rock. These and other factors have given rise to the volcanic activity of the Castle Range and North Pacific Coast. The violent explosion of Mount St. Helens in 1980 made the name of that mountain into a household word. Another Cascade Range volcano, 14,162 foot-high Mount Shasta, lies just north of the park and can easily be seen from Vista Point. Although it is currently quiescent, Mount Shasta is still an active volcano. Heat and steam from the mountain's core quickly melt the snow on its southern face each year.

Castle Crags is believed to have been formed some 170 to 225 million years ago by the same basic process as the Cascade Range. In this case, however, an enormous mass of granitic material was heated deep in the earth. Because of its heat retention ability the granite slowly melted its way upward in much the same way that a hot air balloon rises through cooler surrounding air. Castle Dome, which resembles Half Dome in Yosemite Valley, owes its shape to this balloon-like formation process. The granite of the Crags is similar in age and composition to that of the eastern Sierra Nevada.

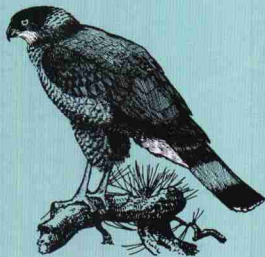
During the last million years or so the Crags have been altered and carved by the forces of wind, rain, ice, and several small glaciers that once perched atop its cliffs. These forces have completely removed the softer materials that once surrounded and covered the Crags.

A still different formation can be seen southwest of the park where the Grey Rocks form the crest of Flume Creek Ridge. Geologically unlike either the Crags or Mount Shasta, the Grey Rocks consist of a great weathered slab of metamorphic greenstone and slate that has been thrust sideways - over and on top of serpentine glacial material.

Flora and Fauna

The trees, shrubs, and flowering plants of this area range from the valley oak of the Upper Sonoran Life Zone to the red fir and Jeffery pine of the Canadian Life Zone. Pacific yew, Port Orford and incense cedars, black and valley oaks, sugar and ponderosa pines, Douglas-fir, and white fir can be found near the river. Azalea, tiger lily, pitcher plant, and several kinds of ceanothus and manzanita can also be found in the park. Red fir, Jeffrey pine, weeping spruce, as well as pinemate manzanita, western ledum, and many high-elevation flowers can be found along the three-mile-long trail to Castle Dome. Vine maple and dogwoods provide incomparable color during the autumn months.

Wildlife at Castle Crags includes Steller's jays, robins, Brewer's blackbirds, western meadowlarks, common ravens, western bluebirds, red-tailed hawks, Cooper's hawks, and great blue herons. Mammals include the coyote, gray fox, bobcat, black bear, black-tailed deer, raccoon, California ground squirrel, gray squirrel, fisher, and in the higher reaches of the park, mountain lion.



Cooper's Hawk

Please Remember:

- * Dogs are permitted only in the campground and picnic areas. They are not allowed on trails. They must be kept on leash during the day and in an enclosed vehicle or tent at night.
- * Fires are permitted only in the stoves or fireplaces that have been provided. Ground fires are not allowed. Down wood is part of the natural scene and may not be gathered for campfires, but you are welcome to bring your own fuel or purchase what you need at the park office.
- * Speed limit on park roads is 15 mph.
- * Quiet hours are 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. Generators should not be operated between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.
- * Loaded firearms and fireworks are not allowed in the park.

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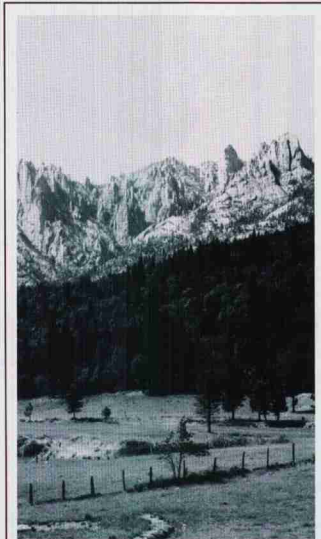
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CASTLE CRAGS

State
Park



CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS

Castle Crags State Park is located in the forest-covered mountains just north of the Sacramento Valley. It features soaring spires of ancient granite and includes about two miles of the cool, quick-running upper Sacramento River. Surrounded by primitive back country, the park is six miles south of Dunsmuir and about twenty-five miles north of Lake Shasta on Interstate 5. Elevations range from 2,000 feet along the river to more than 6,000 feet at the top of the Crags. Winters are cold and wet, but long, warm summers and easy access make the park a popular place to visit throughout the rest of the year.

From a scenic overlook within the park, one can see the dramatic skyline features that command this portion of northern California. To the north, dominating everything else for a hundred miles around, is 14,162-foot-high Mount Shasta, an incredibly beautiful, snow-covered and presently quiescent volcano. Closer at hand are the glacier polished Crags for which the park is named. Unrelated to the recent volcanic activity of Mount Shasta, the Crags are made up of granitic material (granodiorite) that was formed some 170 million years ago far beneath the surface of the earth and later forced slowly upward through a blanket of serpentine. A still different formation can be seen to the southwest, where the Grey Rocks form the crest of Flume Creek Ridge. Geologically unlike either the Crags or Mount Shasta, the Grey Rocks consist of a great weathered slab of metamorphic rock, principally greenschist and slate, that has been thrust sideways over and on top of serpentine.

Camping and Picnicking

There are 64 family campsites, each with table and stove. Food is best kept in the trunk of your car where its odor will not attract animals especially at night. Many of the campsites are large enough to accommodate camp trailers up to 21 feet, or motorhomes to 27 feet, although no hookups are available and there is no dump station. Combination buildings with restrooms, hot showers and wash-tubs are nearby.

Campsite reservations can be made by calling MISTIX at 1-800/444-7275 and using your VISA or Mastercard. Reservations are recommended during the summer months to assure you of a campsite on your arrival. The park is open during the winter on a first-come, first-served basis.

Environmental campsites have been established to reintroduce an old idea - camping as a means of "getting away from it all" and getting back in touch with nature. Each secluded camp has a table and fire pit. Pit toilets are located nearby. Campers must carry their own water and supplies

to the sites from the parking areas. Castle Crags State Park has two environmental camp areas: *Lippencott Meadow* and *Cattail Pond*. To use any of these sites, please check with the Park Office.

The picnic areas are located across the river from the park's main entrance in cool forest groves. Tables and stoves are provided, but the main attraction is the Sacramento River. It offers good fishing for rainbow trout in season, and there are more than two miles of riverside trail and several hundred acres of undeveloped forest in which to stroll.

A tunnel beneath the freeway and railroad, and a bridge across the river make it a safe and easy walk from the campground to the river and nearby picnic areas.

Activities

Interpretive Programs: Campfire programs and other informal talks and demonstrations are held during the summer throughout the park. Programs describe the area's history, plants and animals as well as other topics. Ranger-guided walks are also scheduled. Check the park bulletin boards or the park office for specific times and places.

Fishing is usually good in the Sacramento River during the season (April through November). Rainbow trout are often taken near the picnic areas and at the junction of the river and Soda Creek. Flies, lures and bait are all effective. *Note: Within the state park, catch and release is in effect until further notice.*



Hiking is a favorite activity at Castle Crags State Park and trails range from easy to strenuous. There are 24 miles of improved trails available for your use.

Horses are allowed only on designated riding trails in the state park system. Within this park, ten miles of the Pacific Crest Trail are designated riding trail.

Trails

Indian Creek Trail is an gentle, mile-long, self-guided nature trail. It features a slight elevational rise and offers spectacular views of the Crags as well as a representative sample of the types of plants that grow in Castle Crags State Park.

Craggs Trail/Indian Springs Trail is a strenuous 2.7 mile hike. It rises 2,250 feet from Vista Point to the base of Castle Dome and offers exceptionally beautiful vistas. The cut-off for Indian Springs is 1.6 miles up the Craggs Trail. The spring itself features cool, clear water bubbling up out of the ground. The Craggs Trail continues, breaking out of the forest canopy just beyond the Indian Springs cut off, and ends at the base of Castle Dome, an excellent spot for a picnic.

Root Creek Trail is a moderately strenuous mile-long trail. It passes through cool forest areas with occasional views of the Crags before ending at Root Creek, an ideal place to rest and soak your feet in the creek.

Ten miles of the **Pacific Crest Trail** run through the park along the base of the Crags. It offers gentle walking and spectacular vistas especially of the Crags themselves.

History

Fur hunters and other travelers who passed through this area prior to 1850 generally described the Indians who lived in the vicinity of the park as friendly. But in 1851, a brief, unsuccessful gold rush drove off most of the wild game and filled the rivers and streams with silt, ruining the annual salmon run. The Indians objected angrily to these inroads on their age-old way of life, and relations with subsequent settlers were strained at best.

In 1855, many Indians were killed in a very one-sided battle - perhaps the last one in the West in which Indians relied exclusively upon bows and arrows. Joaquin Miller, who later became world famous as "the poet of the Sierras," wrote several somewhat contradictory but invariably heroic accounts of the battle in which he claimed to have been wounded by an arrow.

Starting in the 1850s and for about 50 years thereafter, numerous freight wagons and many travellers including the horse drawn stages of the California-Oregon Stage Com-

pany, found their way through the park and the river canyon by means of the old California-Oregon toll road. Then in 1886, the Southern Pacific Railroad was put through the canyon, opening the country to large-scale mining and lumbering operations. Narrow-gauge steam railways were built into the nearby backcountry and even today, though the rails have long since been removed, many of the old railroad beds and other signs of early day logging are still visible in the park.

Gold mining began in 1851 throughout this area but was not highly successful. The search for other minerals proved more rewarding, however. The Altoona Quicksilver Mine, for example, was opened near Whalen Summit (southwest of Castle Crags) in the late 1860s or early 1870s. It was the most successful mine in the Castle Creek District, and continued to operate until 1958.

Chromite was not only mined, but also refined and consumed in this part of the state. The finished product - chrome - was used to line furnaces in the copper smelters that once operated in this general area. A chromite concentrating mill once stood on the site now occupied by the park office. It was in operation from the early 1940s until 1959 when the site was acquired as an addition to Castle Crags State Park.

The basic industry of the Castella-Castle Crags area is the lumber and timber business. Historically, perhaps the largest mill operation in the area was owned by the Red Cross Lumber Company, which operated three mills in the vicinity including one at Soda Creek. More than 18 mills once operated in the area under various names, but today only a few remain.

A number of resorts sprang up with the coming of the railroad, generally little hotels near one of the region's many mineral springs. These establishments were likely to boast about their friendly and peaceful atmosphere, fresh air, good food, and most important of all - the restorative value of the area's mineral springs. One such spring bubbles out of the rock fountain near the park's picnic area close beside the Sacramento River. For many years, water from this spring was treated and then bottled and sold as Castle Rock Mineral Water, winner of a blue ribbon in 1899 at the California State Fair.

During the 1920s and 30s, a citizen's committee worked diligently to establish a park that would protect and ensure public access to Castle Crags. In 1927 and 1928, photographs of the crags were prominently featured in the successful campaign to create a California State Park System. The first 925 acres of Castle Crags park land was acquired in 1935.

